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SUBJECT: Goma Report September 10 -
Action spreads to Minova

Following report was co-written by Amy Sink (USAID/OFDA) and Haywood Rankin and Geoff Parker (STATE):

11. (SBU) Summary: CNDP forces on September 10 remain within striking distance of the strategic town of Kanyabayonga (well north of the normal area of CNDP control), but MONUC has strengthened its presence there and CNDP has not moved further north. Meanwhile, heavy fire erupted in the hills west of Kirotse and Bweramana (south of Sake) between CNDP and FARDC/Mai Mai, and there are reports that CNDP has cut the road to South Kivu or taken or occupied parts of Minova (on Lake Kivu just in South Kivu), but these remain unconfirmed. OCHA says there has been significant human displacement in the Petit Nord over the past two weeks, and humanitarian access has been seriously affected by the insecurity. If current insecurity persists, the upcoming planting season and harvest will be negatively impacted, thus further exacerbating food insecurity. End Summary.

CNDP advances toward Kanyabayonga halted

12. (SBU) The CNDP force that arrived at Kayala, 20 km south of Kanyabayonga, on September 9 apparently remains there but has not attempted to move on Kanyabayonga or otherwise cut the main road north. CNDP may have had a firefight further west with FDLR at Bikende. North Kivu brigade affirms that FARDC moved its 31st battalion, which recently finished training with MONUC for action against FDLR, down from the Grand Nord to a position at Mirangi, on the road from Kayala to Kanyabayonga. The 31st battalion appears to be holding its ground or even advancing toward the CNDP force at Kayala.

13. (SBU) Meanwhile, the North Kivu brigade has significantly reinforced its presence in Kanyabayonga and moved into commanding positions in the hills around the city and its presence there may deter CNDP from a direct attack on Kanyabayonga. North Kivu brigade now affirms that CNDP is occupying the village of Kibirizi (which is about the same distance south of the main highway, at Rwindi, as Kayala is south of the highway at Kanyabayonga), meaning that CNDP has some presence in a 15-km-wide band between Nyanzale and the highway.

New fighting near Kirotse and Bweramana

14. (SBU) At opening of day September 10, fighting erupted in yet a new area, in the hills west of Kirotse and Bweramana (on Lake Kivu south of Sake), with heavy firing between CNDP and FARDC with Mai Mai Cobra (closely allied to FARDC). Some shots landed on North Kivu brigade's base at Kirotse. Reports from NGOs through the day suggested that CNDP had cut the road to South Kivu and even occupied or at least "been present in" Minova (port just south of the

provincial border), but these reports are not confirmed by MONUC. A source living inside Minova said at 17:00 that there was "still shooting going on" in the small town. South Kivu brigade, according to Deputy Chief of Staff Col. Cunliffe, affirmed at dusk that there was a "CNDP threat" to Minova but that the South Kivu brigade base (Pakistani) there was not under attack. It estimated that 400 IDP's had moved to Minova from areas to the north and west in the course of the day. Some forty NGO personnel had also moved there, and were evacuated by sea.

15. (SBU) Meanwhile, there was sporadic exchange of fire all day around Ntamugenga (south of Rutshuru), an area in the informal buffer zone that has been contentious ever since August 29, when FARDC occupied it.

16. (SBU) In the Ndosho quarter of Goma, on the road west to Sake, a MONUC truck was attacked by a crowd, the first recent instance in Goma of anti-MONUC fervor that has been most notable in the Rutshuru area. On September 9, an MSF vehicle was attacked by a crowd in Sake, apparently because it was mistaken for being MONUC.

IDP flows increase

17. (SBU) The U.S. team in Goma met OCHA's Goma chief Patrick Lavand'homme September 10 for an overview of the humanitarian dimension of the crisis of the past two weeks. He estimated that there has been significant human displacement in the Petit Nord, including 55,000 IDP's who have been re-displaced. He said that numerous towns and villages have been largely emptied of population. These include the Rutshuru corridor (he cited in particular

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Ntamugenga and Karambi, east of Mutabo), the Nyanzale area (he cited Kibirizi and Katwe), Numbi (in South Kivu), the Mweso area (he cited Kashuga and Katsiru), and lower Tongo. The Rutshuru corridor, Nyanzale area, and Numbi have all seen fighting during this period. Tongo is located at the edge of CNDP-controlled terrain west of Rutshuru, where there has not so far been fighting, and the departure of the population on the lower flank of the escarpment at Tongo remains a mystery.

18. (SBU) Kashuga was, until a week ago, the extreme northwest point of CNDP control, where CNDP directly confronted PARECO, Mai Mai Mongol, and FDLR. CNDP abandoned it just prior to the beginning of its move against JTN, Katsiru, and Nyanzale, apparently needing to remove forces there in order to effect the thrust north. NGO's present in Mweso and Kitchanga have witnessed throngs of civilians on the road from Mweso to Kitchanga fleeing Kashuga (where PARECO or Mai Mai Mongol have now perpetrated "uncontrollable looting"), villages between Kashuga and Mweso, and Mweso itself. MSF has evacuated its personnel from its hospital at Mweso. CNDP appears to have thinned forces near its center, in order to disperse them toward attacks in the far north and south of its range. Lavand'homme said that there has also been movement of civilian population along the Masisi road from Bihambwe to Matanda (i.e., people within the area of CNDP control are moving east away from the western edge of CNDP control along the road), apparently fearing a FARDC build-up at Katale.

Humanitarian Access

19. (SBU) Displacement from Numbi in South Kivu has reportedly been southwards towards Kalungu. Humanitarian presence has been reduced to minimal or no staff in many areas, particularly in Rutshuru. In Rutshuru town, Mercy Corps is one of the few NGO's remaining, providing water services to the collection of nearby IDP camps. In western Rutshuru, most NGO's have evacuated with the exception of Kitchanga (MSF and ICRC) and Mweso (only MSF). IRC and Save the Children have attempted to reach Kitchanga, but as of this afternoon were experiencing difficulties in Sake. This would be a disturbing trend if continued as it would essentially cut off western Rutshuru and much of Masisi.

110. (SBU) Humanitarian access has also been impeded on occasions by

the armed groups on either side. OCHA reported that last week one WFP food convoy was stopped. Drivers were told to unload their cargo and transport troops. Two of the four trucks have yet to be recovered. Similarly, a FARDC commander in Kanyabayonga took the keys from a humanitarian truck driver with the same intent of moving his troops; fortunately, he was eventually dissuaded. Such incidences may seriously compromise the neutrality of humanitarian agencies in the eyes of both armed groups and civilians.

Food Security Situation

¶11. (SBU) The current food security situation in North Kivu is tenuous. Humanitarian access to IDP camps, host communities, and newly displaced populations is severely limited by ongoing fighting and increasing hostile reactions toward international organizations by communities. On September 8, IDP's in Kibumba camp protested against MONUC and UN World Food Program (WFP) trucks which were returning to Goma. In addition, OCHA reports that two WFP-contracted trucks which were commandeered by CNDP for troop movements last week remain missing. (Note: WFP has not confirmed this information. End note.)

¶12. (SBU) This latest fighting and resulting displacement are occurring right as the planting season commences prior to the rainy season. Should this latest episode of insecurity prevent people from accessing their fields for more than a few weeks, the following harvest will likely be compromised, thus further exacerbating food insecurity. According to WFP, this would be the fourth consecutive harvest to be negatively impacted by the conflict. People have reportedly prematurely harvested some of their crops to avoid pillage by armed groups. They have also planted soy, a less desirable crop to steal due to the long time required to cook it.

¶13. (SBU) WFP's logistical operations have also been impacted by the violence. Food convoys which were to cross into DRC from Uganda via the Bunagana border post have been diverted to Ishasha and Gisenyi border posts due to the closure of Bunagana. To date, however, the diversions have only resulted in minor delays to the trucks' arrival in Goma.

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GARVELINK